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The CASE of the  
WOOLLEN MANUFACTURERS in the West Riding  
of the County of *York*.

FOR Time immemorial, the manufacturing of Woollen Cloth hath been carried on in different Parts of the West Riding of the County of York, particularly in those bordering upon the Rivers Aire and Calder, and the Rivulets communicating therewith, and also in that Part distinguished by the Name of Saddleworth; in and about the latter of which Places such Cloths as are denominated Plains or Narrow Cloths, have been made, the Market for which is at Huddersfield, where a public Cloth Hall for their Sale was built several Years ago by Sir JOHN RAMSDEN; and in the first-mentioned Parts such Cloths as are called Broad Cloths, Part being mixed or coloured, and Part white, which have been chiefly disposed of at Leeds, where Two public Halls have been also erected for that Purpose, much to the Convenience of the Merchant and Manufacturer, one of which is the Property of the Mixt Broad Clothiers, and the other of the White Broad Clothiers.

At various Times Acts of Parliament have been passed for regulating the Manufacture of Woollen Cloth made within the West Riding, and preserving its Credit abroad; and such have been the good Effects attending the System of that Trade, that it has increased in a few Years in a most unparalleled Manner; for in the Year 1769, when Trade was in a flourishing State, no more than Two millions Seven hundred and Seventy-one thousand Six hundred and Sixty-seven Yards of Broad, and Two millions One hundred and Forty-four thousand and Nineteen Yards of Narrow, were made; but in the Year 1792 the astonishing Quantity of Six millions Seven hundred and Sixty thousand Seven hundred and Twenty-eight Yards of the former, and Five millions Five hundred and Thirty-one thousand Six hundred and Ninety-eight Yards of the latter, were manufactured—the Average Value of the Whole in their finished State being at least Three Millions of Money.

With this Increase there hath been an Increase of Merchants of undiminished Wealth, and a general Benefit to the Country, and this during a Period when the Woollen Trade in other Parts of the Kingdom hath been either gradually decaying or making very little Progress; and it is therefore apprehended that this distinguished Prosperity could only have arisen from a System being observed in Yorkshire, which produced and encouraged the Ingenuity and Industry of the Manufacturers

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facturers in a Degree far superior to that of any other Country: The Difference of those Systems will appear in a few Words.

In the West of England (which it is to be lamented cannot boast of such increased Prosperity) the Merchant and Clothier are One Person, and a great Part of the Community are Servants and Journeymen (at stipulated Wages) to that Class, consisting of a few who carry on the Trade by uniting large Bodies of Men in great Factories.

In Yorkshire it hath hitherto been otherwise—every Family might be said to be a distinct Factory, consisting of the Master, his Wife and Children; and in this little Community the Labour of making a Piece of Cloth is happily divided, so that every Individual takes a Part in Proportion to their Ability; and the Master, whilst providing a comfortable Maintenance for himself and Family, superintends and directs their Conduct.

In this Situation have the Manufacturers there been dispersed through the different Villages, enjoying a small Farm, much to their own Comfort, and the very great Advantage of the Landed Interest; and while they are thus providing for themselves, they provide for a numerous Poor, and diffuse the Benefits of their Labour and Ingenuity among all Ranks of People.

To procure this happy and independent State to the Clothier, Industry and 101. are sufficient to raise any Man; and to this Cause may be attributed the vast Number of Master Manufacturers, who are not less at present, upon a moderate Computation, than from Ten to Fifteen Thousand Persons, giving Bread, or finding Employment, one Way or other, for several Hundred Thousand Individuals.

Besides, in Yorkshire, every one hath an equal Chance, by Means of the public Markets, of disposing of his Cloth, the best Maker always obtaining the best Price, and the readiest Sale; and hence has arisen that Degree of Emulation and Variety which have not a little contributed to such an amazing Increase in the Trade; and from this Variety, that promiscuous Demand by Foreign Orders hath been executed with a Celerity unknown in the West of England, or any other Country, and which can never be performed by a single Individual, however opulent.

In this State, every Master Maker feels and rejoices in the Prosperity of Trade; and in the Time of its Depression he patiently submits (well knowing he bears no more than a proper Proportion of the Distress) or attempts a Remedy by redoubling his Attention and Industry: And it is to be remarked, no Instance occurs of the Cloth Manufacturers in Yorkshire ever seeking Redress, whatever they might suffer, in a riotous or unlawful Manner.

Not content with this happy Distribution of Labour and Profit, some Merchants some Time ago became Cloth Makers; and the better to carry on the Trade erected Factories, as in the West of England, however not to such an Extent as to give any just Cause of Alarm: But one is now erected in the Neighbourhood of Leeds, which is intended to congregate every Branch of the Manufacture, and therein it is said may be made and finished, ready for Exportation, 100 Cloths per Week, which is after the Rate of One Fortieth Part of all the Cloth which



which was manufactured in Yorkshire in the Year 1792, when Trade was in its most flourishing Condition; and upon the Supposition that Twenty Cloths (which is about the Truth) were the Proportion made on an Average by each Master Manufacturer, in that Year, there will be 260 Master Manufacturers reduced by this One Factory to a dependent State, and 40 such Factories will reduce the whole Body of Master Manufacturers to the same Situation, unless additional Employment was to arise by an Increase of Trade.

The Temptation for this Innovation, may be placed to the flattering Prospect of obtaining the distinct Profits of the Woolstapler, the Salter, the Oilman, the Mill Owner, the Dyer, and the Clothier (who are all involved in the same Consequences) and to this may be added, the temporary Benefits which will arise to such Speculator, by his becoming in reality what he represents himself to be to the Foreign Merchant, the Manufacturer of the Article which he exports; a Reason for other Merchants to erect similar Factories.

Alarmed at this, and still more alarmed at the Certainty, if found profitable, that the same System will be generally introduced into Yorkshire, which has been attended with such ruinous Consequences in other Parts of the Nation, the Clothiers cast themselves upon the Legislature for Protection, trusting to have such Relief as the Importance of their Case shall require.

To the political Consequences of this Innovation, which will certainly diminish both Buyers and Master Makers, which will render the public Halls unnecessary, and which will destroy the Freedom and Independence of the Country, may be added the Immorality which is always produced by the Association of large Bodies of People.

MARCH 10, 1794.



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